



# Disaster News

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## MITIGATION—WAYS TO REDUCE DAMAGES FROM FUTURE DISASTERS

**PASADENA, Calif.** – Mitigation means taking action to reduce the risk of loss of life or property from a future hazardous event. There is no way to guarantee that we will not be affected by disasters in the future, but there are steps homeowners can take to lessen damage and losses. Being proactive makes a difference.

California has endured severe storms over past months that have saturated the ground and led to flooding and mudslides in some areas. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) offer information for homeowners on measures they can take to protect their home and family from such events. As the threat of storms continues, they recommend that residents take actions to protect the lives of their loved ones, friends, neighbors, and their property.

### Prepare your family

There are simple measures you can take before any disaster strikes to help protect yourself and your family.

- Develop and rehearse a family disaster plan—what to do if you have to suddenly leave your home.
- Include a communications plan—how you will contact each other if you are separated.
- Put together emergency supplies, one set for your house and one for your car. Emergency kits should include food, water, a first aid kit, flashlights, a radio, and plenty of batteries. The kit in your car should also have flares and jumper cables.
- Know how to turn off your utilities, and keep the necessary tools at hand. Make sure other members of your family know how to do this too. If you turn off your gas, **do not turn it back on yourself**. Call the gas company.
- Make copies of vital documents, such as wills, birth certificates, financial records, insurance policies and credit card numbers. Keep the originals in a safe deposit box.
- Make a detailed inventory of your home, garage and surrounding property, with photographs or videotape. Keep those in a safe place.
- When weather threatens, turn on your radio to a local station to stay informed of imminent danger.

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### **Protect your home**

If you live in an area that is subject to flooding or mudflows, take the following short-term and long-term measures to help protect your home:

- Elevate the furnace, water heater, and electric panel in your house.
- Install “check valves” in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into your home.
- Purchase flood insurance if you do not already have it. Flood insurance protects against flooding and mudflows; homeowners’ insurance does not. Call 1-800-427-4661 for information on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
- If your house is in a flood plain, find out if your structure is compliant with local building codes regarding flooding. You can get this information through your local officials.
- Construct protection to stop floodwater from entering your home.
- Find out where your community stores and distributes sandbags. When you use them, make sure you do not divert runoff onto the property of others.
- Have flexible pipe fittings for gas and water lines installed by a licensed contractor to local codes.

If your home is in a location where it may be affected by landslides, consult your city or county geologist to assess your risk. Seek advice on any preventive or corrective measures you can take.

The following Disaster Recovery Centers set up by FEMA and OES will have mitigation experts and information available during the following hours:

Oak View Park and Resource Center  
555 Mahoney Ave. (off Highway 33)  
Oak View, Calif.  
Sat., Feb. 19, 2005  
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.

Las Virgines Water District, Bldg.8  
4232 Las Virgines Road  
Calabasas, Calif.  
Tues., Feb. 22, 2005 and Sat., Feb. 26, 2005  
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

FEMA has produced a publication called, **Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness**. For this and other information, you may go to FEMA’s Web site at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). In addition, you can check with your county’s office of public safety or check out the OES Web site at [www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov).

OES coordinates overall state agency response to major disasters in support of local government. The office is responsible for ensuring California’s readiness to respond to and recover from natural, manmade and war-caused emergencies and for assisting local governments in their emergency preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery efforts.

SBA is the federal government’s primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations.

FEMA prepares the nation for all hazards and manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, trains first responders, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.

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*Disaster recovery assistance is available to any individual without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, economic status, or disability.*